

SI WARNER'S GOLD MINE



Everyone Seemed "Flambusted"

THET thar' old Si Warner," Ebenezer Brown, the store oracle of Endville, New-Hampshire, used to say, "between his greens garden and his tendin' the Southam's place winters, he oughter to have put by somethin' considerable; but he ain't. Why? Because the first two minutes he gets a piece saved up he goes plumb off'n the handle and does somethin' foolish. He's got a mighty kittenish mind, Si has. Recollect his patent hay-hoister?" And Ebenezer would lead the laugh that followed.

The hoister was a fixture in Endville annals. Six years before Si had evolved an idea for hoisting hay. It assured a fortune, he said. He wrote to a third-rate patent lawyer in Boston, who encouraged him, not mentioning that eight kinds of hay-hoisters already had been invented; and he prepared plans, and drew on his two hundred dollars of savings, and the neighborhood became aroused over the project, Si being acclaimed as a wizard of invention. And finally he went to Boston. Here the lawyer got the rest of the two hundred dollars.

Si came back. "Things didn't go just haow I reckoned they would," he said cheerfully; "but I'll kinder tackle somethin' again one of these days I desay."

The store coterie laughed derisively. "Not with that two hundred," suggested Orade Brown, stretching himself against a sugar barrel.

"Well, I took a try anyhow. It's a pile more'n some of you'll do in a year of Christmases. Thet's what I guess!" And Si settled once more to the old routine.

But the passion to make money had him in its grasp, and when by scripping economy he had saved something, he would invariably essay another "try." He invested money with advertisers in the weekly paper; he bought stocks; once he helped the would-be patentee of a hair restorer. All went as the hay-hoister investment had done. Si, however, was never discouraged.

"We'll keep right on a-tryin', Maria, and one of these times we'll get thar'," he would say to Mrs. Si.

Two whole years, however, had passed since the last "try," when the Four Ace gold discoveries in Idaho began to catch public attention. The weekly paper gave three whole pages to Four Ace. It described the wonderful deposits of high-grade ore; it told of veins carrying three thousand dollars to the ton; it showed photographs of "Arizona Jim," the "broke" prospector of Prescott, and "Bootblack" Little of Spokane, millionaires within the month.

Si devoured the stories open-

"My Belief's Thet a Man's Gotter Kinder Keep on Tryin'!"

By BERNARD W. S. THOMSON

mouthed, and scanned the pictures wide-eyed. Their cumulative effect was great. An idea began to germinate in his mind—an idea which astounded him into uncommon quiet with its audacity. A second and a third weekly paper came. The Four Ace excitement increased. At last his idea matured.

"By gum, Maria!"—Si used "By gum!" for epochs—"By gum, Maria!" he burst out to his wife, as he tossed down his paper and looked across at her. "I guess this time I hev' got somethin' sure. It beats hay hoistin' or hair restorin'. Maria," Si spoke slowly, "what ails us kinder takin' a try at goin' out thar' to Four Ace and findin' a gold mine fer ourselves?"

The white sock his wife was darning tumbled on the cat. She stared at him dully. Maria Warner was, as Si said to himself, "flambusted."

Finally she found tongue. "Well, Si Warner, if you ain't the greatest!" she gasped.

Si's own heart was beating rapidly. "But I'd best look kinder nat'ral, I guess," he thought.

"Why, what's the matter, Maria?" he asked. "All we've gotter do's just go. It's as easy as rollin' off a log."

"But we ain't got the money, and what do you know about findin' gold mines?"

"Oh, thet's all right," returned Si confidently. "I've read up on this thing. We've got fifty-four dollars ourselves, and I'll get Ebenezer Brown and five other of them fellers to put in twenty dollars each. Then any gold mine we get we'll share even with 'em. Grub-stakin', they call it out thar' West. And as fer the gold mine, all you've gotter do 's to get a piece of ground and dig 'er up good and deep. Why, we might make ten thousand dollars easy, Maria! We could take thet trip to New-York then."

Maria's eyes glistened. Presently she nodded her head and picked up the white sock. "Go ahead, Si," said she. "I'd as soon own a gold mine, I reckon."

Go ahead! Si was so fired with eagerness that even the broaching of the subject to Ebenezer Brown and "them fellers" did not make him flinch an instant. That very night he marched on the store for the attack.

Pushing the wonders of Four Ace into the talk and with a prefatory "By gum!" he detailed his plan. Si's peroration was impressive. Two men opened their mouths to speak, but only gaped. There was stillness. Everyone seemed as "flambusted" as Maria had been. By a common movement all eyes gradually focused on Ebenezer Brown.

The oracle gazed at a calico remnant, yellow roses on blue. A potato-bug crawled up the cheese-cutter. The silence continued. At last Ebenezer spoke.

"Si Warner," said he, "you're the flightiest man outside the State House, and because you are so flighty it's jest possible you might do somethin' with the flightiest idea you've had to date. I've heerd tell of this Four Ace, and gold's thar' sure. I'm jest fool enough to risk twenty dollars to know whether thar's any thar' fer me or not."

Delphi had spoken, and a fortnight later the Si Warners were in Four Ace. It had cost them much more than they had estimated to get there, and living was more expensive. They were bewildered with the turmoil and hubbub; they felt old and



Si Watched Him With the Corner of an Eye

weak amid that ingathering of the young and strong. Yet their courage was unhesitating.

"A feller's gotter keep kinder shovin' to get a gold mine here, I guess," said Si, "and I reckon the fust thing's to get the lay of this here potato-patch."

So for a week he went about the camp. He saw mining claims being worked; he learned the existence of such things as shafts and tunnels, and that to "dig 'er up good and deep" the rock had to be broken by blasting. Finally he saw some specimens of rich free-milling ore, with the free gold sparkling all over it.

"It's the purtiest stuff you ever seen, Maria," he told her, "and shines just like the lake to home when the sun's on the ripples."

And this set Maria thinking of the home lake and the maples beside it and the daisied meadow, and looking at the dreary board shacks and the rough men of the street before her, a lump rose in her throat that forbade her answering.

"Jest around the town," went on Si, "all the property's took up, although they do say thet five or six miles out thar's some thet ain't. But I met a feller to-day thet kinder took a fancy to me, and he says he's got a claim he'd let me have cheap, and I guess we'd best take it. I was walkin' along, kinder lookin' around at things, when he comes up smilin' and he says: 'Hullo, Uncle Joshua! What're you doin' out here?'"

"Hullo yourself, mister!" I says. "My name ain't Joshua. My name's Si Warner."

"Well, Si Warner," he says, "what're you doin'?"

"Oh," I says, "me and Maria's come out here to get a claim and dig fer a gold mine."

"Well," he says, "it's lucky you found me jest naow."

"I wasn't never lookin' fer you," I says.

"Look here, Si," he says very neighbor-like, "I've got a claim a little more'n five miles out of camp thet I'll let you hev' reasonable. I'm kinder lazy and guess I don't want to work on her. But you and Maria can go out thar' and sink a shaft till you strike the ledge of gold ore," he says, laughin' friendly. "You won't hev' the trouble of locatin' a claim yourself, and I'll let you hev' it fer a hundred dollars."

"By gum!" I says, "I ain't got thet much."

"Well, haow much'll you give fer it?" he says.

"So we got kinder talkin' this way, and at last he says he'll take fifty dollars fer it. I guess we might's well get it, Maria. I reckon it's as good to dig on as another. I'm to see the stranger in the mornin' to let him know."

And the next day Si was the

